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MARY ANN

AND

Other Poems

BY

John Spillon

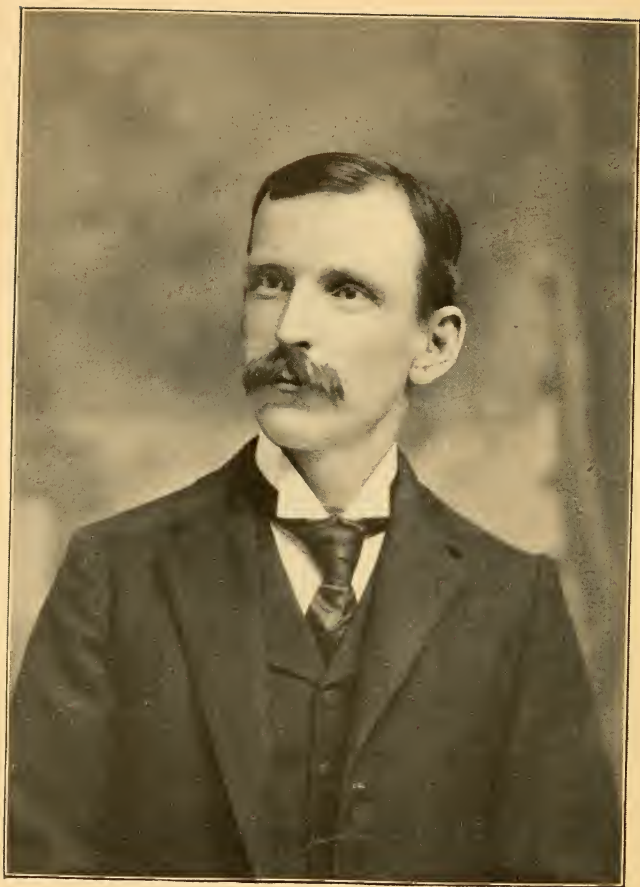
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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.



JOHN SPOLLON.

MARY ANN;

OR,

Advice To a Street-Walker,

AND OTHER POEMS.

BY

✓
JOHN SPOLLON,

Author of "Adventures of a Tramp," etc.

Published by

JOS. M. WADE,

BOSTON, MASS.

1900.

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BY

JOHN SPOLLON.

Dedicated

To the Temple whose Pillars form a Square,
And to every man who worships there
Beneath its vast dome, held high above
By Liberty, Nature, Truth and Love.

INTRODUCTION.

At the suggestion of Mr. Joseph M. Wade, in whose journal, FIBRE AND FABRIC, many of them first appeared, I make this selection from about two hundred songs, satires and poems which I have written. This book contains what Mr. Wade considers my message. I opine that every man is born with a message of some kind, but not every man finds time to deliver his.

My poetical writings, in a lighter and more humorous vein, will appear later, in a larger volume, at the same price, if I have time, and there is a demand for it.

PREFACE.

I pity the man who can't dream as he drudges,
Thus making his drudgery nothing but play;
Whose mind is so small that it meanly begrudges
Room to thoughts that bend not o'er the task of
the day.
On the man who, when Fancy familiarly nudges,
Cannot spare a brief moment the charmer to greet,
June's sun may shine brightly as onward he trudges,
But the sands of the desert are under his feet.

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PROLOGUE: RHYME AND RHYTHM.

As it fits the poet's humor
And the burden of his poem,
Rhyme is like the sun-kissed ripples,
Or the wind-tossed foaming surges,
Or the mountain-mocking billows
On the surface of the ocean.

Many praise the perfect metre,
Criticise the rhyme and rhythm,
As they gaze upon the changing
Moods and motions of old Ocean,
Who should imitate the diver,
Plunging deep beneath the surface
Where the mystic under current
Will reward them with the treasures
From the superficial hidden;
Will reward them with the meaning
Of the poet and his soul-thought.

MARY ANN; OR, ADVICE TO A STREET-WALKER.

It seems to me you're far too pert,
Mary Ann,
A saucy, brazen, desperate flirt,
Mary Ann.
With high society begirt,
A man like me you cannot hurt;
For you're not sprung from hothouse dirt,
Mary Ann, my Mary Ann.

It is a shame to walk the street,
Mary Ann,
Accosting every man you meet,
Mary Ann.
Resolve to tread the pave no more;
Take a room with your name upon the door.
There's such a thing as a decent w——,
Mary Ann, my Mary Ann.

To hide the odor of the tomb,
Mary Ann,
Sprinkle yourself with loud perfume,
Mary Ann.
Keep hidden in your private room
Some twenty pounds of Youthful Bloom;
'Twill cover wrinkles—postpone doom,
Mary Ann, my Mary Ann.

When into furnished rooms you go,
Mary Ann,
Wear silk instead of calico,
Mary Ann.
And here's another pretty plan:
There's difference in the eyes of man,
'Twixt *Marianne* and Mary Ann,
Mary Ann, my Mary Ann.

The name upon your door should be
Marianne.
There's quite a difference, you see:
Marianne.
Although it sounds about the same,
It *looks* much better as a name.
Thin is the wall 'twixt praise and blame,
Mary Ann, my Mary Ann.

And when in public you appear,
Mary Ann,
Of low society keep clear,
Mary Ann.
Turn up your nose with haughty sneer
When old acquaintances draw near,
And for the "higher circles" steer,
Mary Ann, my Mary Ann.

Drink sherry wine instead of beer,
Mary Ann,
And leave off chewing snuff, my dear
Mary Ann.
Above all things keep clean, I pray;
Be sure to take a bath each day,
And you will handle better pay,
Mary Ann, my Mary Ann.

Take this advice and you'll begin,
 Mary Ann,
Through a world of woe your way to win,
 Mary Ann.
When you let Respectability pin
Her cloak around your scarlet sin,
Perhaps I'll call and find you in,
 Mary Ann, my Mary Ann.

TWO GRAVES.

Some years ago there lived a maid
As ugly as a porcupine,
Never a sunny smile essayed
To make that homely face divine.
Her heart was gall, and unto all
Who dared to mention love to her,
She tossed her head and proudly said,—
“Thank heaven I've a *character!*”

And certainly her virtue had
Impenetrable coat of mail
In homeliness, which not a lad
Ever attempted to assail.
She had a sister, fair and frail,
Whom—when business carried her
Past her window—she would hail:—
“Thank heaven I've a *character!*”

The frail one died, and kind hands laid
Fresh flowers on her verdant sod;
And there were loving hearts that prayed
For mercy unto Mercy's God.

Miss Homely lingered on awhile,
 And then Death came and married her,
 The undertaker, with a smile,
 Off to the graveyard carried her.

Her grave, neglected and forlorn,
 With rank weeds soon was overgrown;
 Brier and thorn were there to warn
 Any who dared approach their throne.
 Like soldiers brave they guard her grave,
 And to the wayside traveller,
 Passing that way, they seem to say,—
 “Thank heaven we’ve a *character!*”

THE RUSSIAN PEASANT TO HIS DYING CHILD.

Departing Spirit, pure and bright,
 Why should I say remain
 In the realm of eternal night
 And life of ceaseless pain?
 If thou wert well advanced in years
 And deeply dyed in guilt,
 There would be cause for fruitless tears,
 But go now—if thou wilt.
 For thou hast found a friend in Death,
 And not a dreaded foe.
 Welcome him with parting breath
 And gladly with him go.

* * * * *

When thou hast ta'en thy outward flight,
 Ere thou art too far gone—
 Just pause and look back at the sight
 Which yonder sun shines on—

With sweeping glance thou'lt take in all
The works of little Man.
Thou'lt see him toil, fight, strut and crawl,
And hear him plot and plan.
Thou'lt mark, amused, his monkey tricks,
His false gods and his schools;
Hear parsons preaching politics
And dunces teaching fools.
Hear ornaments of science yearn—
And say what they would give—
To know what thou'rt about to learn
While still on earth they live;
See legislative bodies which
Enjoy the sinecure
Of making laws to please the rich
And persecute the poor.
See Intellect--the demigod—
Defend the meanest cause;
Exert his power for vulgar fraud,
And court the clown's applause;
Draw Luxury's coach through Folly's streets,
In mire up to his knees,
While brainless asses on the seats
Within recline at ease.
See Culture bend the pliant knee
Before the titled Hog
And dazzled by rank and pedigree
Burn incense till a fog
Of fulsome adulation shrouds
The loathsome wretch from sight,
As in midsummer heavy clouds
Ward off the sun's hot light;
Whilst, all unheeded, modest Worth
Stands friendless and alone;

No voice to call his powers forth,
They die, with him, unknown.
See Charity's hands outstretched to those
Far o'er the ocean's foam;
Her feet upon the naked toes
Of paupers here at home.
See haughty Honor wave away
The bribe she scorns to touch,
And hear her voice in low tones say:
"Please make it twice as much."
See Youth's fast fleeting springtime spent
In ways of fruitless ends,
And hear his demon—Discontent—
Called Genius by his friends.
When he at last, with footsteps faint,
His favorite phantom nears,
Anticipation's gaudy paint
He'll wash away with tears—
Find Disappointment ghostly pale,
Where rose-cheeked Hope did call,
As when, a child, he tried to nail
A shadow to the wall.
See Manhood—strong, ambitious, proud—
The helm in his firm hand,
Steer straight toward a sunlit cloud,
Which he mistakes for land;
Pursuing still a hopeful course
Till on the reef he's cast,
And age looks back in wild remorse
Upon the wasted past.

* * * * *

But let me not regard with scorn
The planet of my birth;
For after all I'd feel forlorn
And loath to leave thee, earth!

For all thy sins and follies, too,
I'd willingly atone,
If I had not enough to do
To answer for my own.
But thou—my child—thou art not lost;
Be not afraid to go
Away from earth where trouble tossed
I wander to and fro;
Away to realms more beauteous far,
To dwell among the good,
Or travel on from star to star
Till life be understood.

SONG OF THE MARCH WIND.

Sensitive dame, whose tear-dimmed eye
Dwells on Romance's graphic page,
Whose tender heart can heave a sigh
To sufferers on the mimic stage.
Come, since I can't visit thee,
Bravely venture forth to me.

Nay, shudder not at my approach!
Wrapped in armor soft and warm,
I've no power to do thee harm,
And can but help thee to thy coach.

I will sing a song as you roll along,
Than which you never heard a sweeter.
There, you see, as it pleases me,
I'll call thee *you* or I'll call you *thee*.
My song, like me, shall be wild and free,
And not confined to a certain metre.

With my humor it shall vary:
Blustering, shrill, keen, melancholy,
Inconstant, lively, fierce, soft, jolly,
Irregular, odd, fantastic, airy—
Coachman! Coachman! be more wary!
That figure ahead is not a fairy;
Not Imogene, the imaginary,
With whom, on the novel's page, we meet;
Nor any romantic, quaint vagary,
But ragged, famishing *real* Mary.

Don't trample her under your horses' feet,
As she picks her way across the street.
For a wonder, you have safely passed her.
Had you not, she'd deemed it no disaster,
Having little else than life to lose.
Lady, have you no sigh to cast her?
Then—something for which you have no use—
Throw the poor soul your overshoes.
Coachman, drive a little faster.

Ah, madam! surely there's an object worthy of your
tears;
Just look at that young vagabond, he's but a child in
years;
Yet in knowledge and experience he's far ahead of
time:
Knowledge of all kinds of vice—experience in crime.
There shone for him no guiding star when launched
upon life's sea;
No beacon light a warning gave 'gainst shallow com-
pany;
No gentle voice to pilot him, no hand to trim his sail;
His mother died of sheer neglect, his father is in jail.

Left to shape his course alone, he mingled with the
scum,
And is drifting to rascality upon a sea of rum.
He's drifting, drifting hopelessly, no hand is stretched
to save;
Alas! I fear he'll sink into a politician's grave.

Stop! here's another chance to weep.
Here's a row of tenements—*cheap*.
Just come with me and take a peep
At cracks and crevices wide and deep,
Through which I pass with breath of ice.
You'll say they're dear at any price.
The wretched inmates, you will find,
All belong to human kind.
They have, like you, their petty spite
And nonsensical delights,
But aren't blest, like those above 'em,
With wealth and culture to improve 'em.
The frailties strung to your kite's tail
They have, but on a smaller scale.
Yet they are none the worse for that,
My dollar-marked aristocrat!
You'll find domestic dramas there:
In rum the laborer drowns the care
He finds upon his breadless shelf.
His wife, long suffering, in despair,
The river seeks to drown herself.
Whilst I, most mournfully emphatic,
Whistle music *upper attic*.
Ha! Here's another home we pass,
With tenants of the "better class."
There's a shadow hanging o'er this home,
A cloud of shame and woe;

And yet the stranger well may ask:
From whence the threatened blow?
There seems to be no poverty—
There is no lack of bread;
Death is not in waiting here
Beside the sick one's bed;
The parents are no wranglers;
They have no peevish child,
No disobedient daughter,
No son corrupt and wild.
From all such ills they are exempt,
But there is something worse:
The noble spirit's galling chain—
Debt—*debt*, that bitter curse.
The passing stranger well may think
His is a happy lot.
His children prattle round his knee;
He hears, he sees them not.
He only hears the hiss of shame—
Most galling to his pride;
Sees, for the first time, Honor bright
In horror leave his side,
And, shuddering, turn away from him
To hide her burning face,
As o'er his happy threshold falls
The shadow of Disgrace.
Ere he becomes a hypocrite,
A liar and a thief;
Ere in thy boundless Providence
He loses all belief;
While there remains within his breast
One spark of Manhood yet,
Almighty One! reach forth thy hand,
And rescue him from Debt.

* * * * *

Why stops the coach where lights are gleaming
brightly?

Is this the *theatre* where my fair friend nightly

Applauds the efforts of the tragic muse?

Unheard by her my orchestra must rage,

Where storm-clouds curtain Tragedy's true stage.

Thus snugly housed the play-seers nightly lose

Sight of the real show, and leave unheard

The song of real woe. The tragic bard

Is at his best a song-bird in a cage.

THE UNSHRIVED PENITENT.

"To-night there's a soul to be shriven;

O, good priest, arise from your bed.

Brief time for repentance is given,

So make haste," the messenger said.

"The old Squire is rapidly failing;

Grim death at his threshold appears:

Already the Banshee is wailing;

Her voice on the night wind he hears."

Upon the green fields and lone highway

The pale moon her radiance shed,

As through ev'ry short-cut and by-way

The priest on his high mission sped.

In all haste his journey pursuing,

He drew near the edge of a wood,

Hard by where a picturesque ruin

Showed where a proud castle once stood.

'Twas one of those ruins that share in
Adorning the footprints of time—
That furnish the poet of Erin
With many a theme for his rhyme.

Aslant through the roofless walls streaming
The radiant moonlight now falls,
And sets all the bare windows gleaming
As if there were lights in the halls:

Lights, too, that were kindled by fingers
That have no more substance than light.
A moment the passing priest lingers
To gaze at the weird ghostly sight.

Hark! Forth from those ruined walls pouring
Comes a sad, sweet, melodious strain,
'Tis some captive Syren deploring
The loss of her dearly loved main;

Or some fallen angel, complaining
Of her exile from Paradise, sings
A threnody sweet, still retaining
Her voice, though deprived of her wings.

Those voices of various insects,
That sound, on a calm summer night,
Like the breathing of slumbering Nature,
Are hushed now in breathless delight.

All things seem listening and gloating;
The priest stands like one in a dream,
Whilst Time's imperceptibly floating
Down melody's silvery stream.

Alas, for that sinner's hereafter!
 Enchained to the spot stands the priest
 Till the charm is broken by laughter
 Triumphant. The singing has ceased.

He hears in the silence which follows
 The insects their chorus resume.
 A cloud-bank the bright moonlight swallows,
 The ruin is shrouded in gloom.

The gloom and the silence unheeding,
 Approaching the ivy-clad door,
 Undaunted the priest is proceeding
 To enter the ruin and explore.

King Solitude reigning supremely
 In sombre state here meets his view,
 "Who sings at an hour so unseemly?"
 A solemn owl answers: "Ah Whoo!"

A bell ringing two in the morning,
 Though distant, distinctly is heard.
 Time's solemn voice gives him warning,
 Reminds him of duty deferred;

And he, filled with direful misgiving,
 To the penitent's home hurries on,—
 Too late! for he finds on arriving
 That th' unabsolved spirit is gone.

* * * *

"The merciful Lord may forgive him,"
 Said one who had known him of old.
 "The tale of his sin did outlive him;
 Full often have I heard it told.

"His soul was with many sins laden,
But *that* was the worst one I'm sure.
In his young days he courted a maiden
As fair as a May-day—but poor.

"With promises fair he bereft her
Of all she held dear, and—behold!
Having compassed her ruin he left her
And wedded another for gold.

"He tried to thrust money upon her
To sweeten her embittered cup.
Can a rent in the mantle of Honor
By needles of gold be sewn up?

"The crack made in Honor's bright chalice
By gold is cemented in vain,
For the fingers of scorn and malice
Will show where the traces remain.

"She went to be safe from intrusion
To the place where the priest was beguiled,
And there, in despair and seclusion,
She died with her newly born child.

"And we all believed that she haunted
That ruin, lamenting her wrong;
That nightly her spirit voice chanted
A mournful melodious song;

"That—delaying her lover's last unction
Till his spirit met hers face to face,—
'Twas her voice kept the priest from his function
That night in the old trysting place."

NOTE.—I got the idea of the above from an old Irish legend.

"FALLEN" WOMEN.

When a woman falls, God help her, 'tis a heavy, hopeless fall.

Pounced upon that moment by her sisters one and all,
Her attempt to rise but serves to rouse their most vindictive ire.

With their muddy feet upon her, down they hold her
in the mire.

Once on their plane she'll seek in vain for woman's
pity then,

For mercy in a woman's heart is only meant for men.
A man may trip and rise again, and reach ambition's
goal;

But God alone has mercy on a fallen woman's soul.

God help the fallen woman, e'en though liars say she
fell;

For the best of men will listen to the tale the gossips
tell,

And wit is most alluring when rank poison tips the
dart,

They most enjoy sharp-shooting when the target is a
heart.

Sham-Virtue, you're a cruel judge. Beneath your
spotless cloak

There is a big week's washing, and the prying nose
you poke

Into other people's linen is accustomed to vile smells
In the inner chamber of your heart where evil passion
dwells.

BIG BETSY BRADY.

Who was Big Betsy Brady? I'll wager you didn't
 spend
Much of your time in this town or you wouldn't ask
 that, my friend.
'Twas her maiden name, but it stuck to her as long as
 she was alive,
Although she had buried four husbands and was
 looking for number five
When she met with Teddy Driscoll, ex-champion
 featherweight.
'Twas something of a Jersey match; but they entered
 the marriage state.
The soberest member of the church could scarce re-
 press a smile
To see the pair when they were spliced march down
 the centre aisle.
Indeed it was enough to make the parson laugh to
 see 'em.
The biggest woman you ever saw outside of a dime
 museum.
With her feet unshod she towered six feet six inches
 high.
Her arm was as big around as an ordinary thigh.
Yet she wasn't burdened by useless fat, she wasn't
 too big around,
But she'd step on the scales and kick the beam at 220
 pound.
Teddy was only five foot three and weighed but a
 hundred and ten;
But he was all there, and I've seen him licking bigger
 and stronger men.
He was wiry, tough and agile; and could spring like
 a tiger-cat—

A fighting man, as I said before, but *she* wasn't aware
of that ;
For he had retired from the business, and he wasn't
the man to blow
And fight his battles over again ; that's why she didn't
know.
Well, they settled down quite peacefully, and the
neighbors began to say :
"She is going to use him better than the men she has
laid away."
The fact is, Betsy was rather proud ; it seems she
looked down on him
With a mixture of scorn and pity, for he was so small
and slim ;
Till at last one day he came home drunk, and she
pounced on him for that ;
Grabbed him by the neck and shook him as a dog
would shake a rat ;
Then flung him into a corner to recover from his bust.
But he staggered, half sobered, to his feet, saying,
"Betsy, I fear I must
Give you a licking, my daisy : 'tis a thing I hate to
do ;
But perhaps you think I haven't much advantage
over you ?"
She looked at him in wonderment, and then she
laughed outright.
Said she : "You've drank enough to-day to deprive
you of your sight.
You don't know who you're talking to, you wretched
little clam ;
So I'll give you a good sound thrashing, just to show
you who I am.
You little runt ! I'll spank you well and tuck you
into bed."

She took a step towards him; he threw up his dukes
and said:

"I never struck a woman yet, and I hate to do it now;
But, Betsy, keep your distance; if you don't I'll larn
you how!"

She made a rush well meant to crush. He ducked,
then leaping high,

Planted two blows upon her nose that made the claret
fly.

Quickly she turned while vengeance churned her
blood to liquid fire,

While alert he stood, as a fighter should, ready to
meet her ire.

At him again like a hurricane the angry woman
dashed;

But a hundred thousand brilliant stars upon her vi-
sion flashed

And both of her eyes were blackened. Yet still with
vision dim

Around she groped and madly hoped to get her hands
on him.

Full well he knew that if she did he wouldn't escape
alive;

So he nimbly hopped, and ducked and dropped; at
every chance let drive

His right and left as lightning swift; then out of
reach he'd jump

While her ponderous arms churned the air with many
a fearful thump.

By this a crowd had gathered, and at each window sill
Heads appeared and bets were made on the outcome
of the mill.

A touch of human nature was observable in the fact
That the men all bet on Betsy, while 'twas Teddy the
women backed.

But no one offered to interfere and put an end to the
 strife,
For it isn't wholesome to meddle in a row between
 man and wife.
One tenderfoot suggested that he for a cop should
 run;
But the rest all swore they'd spill his gore if he dared
 to spoil the fun.
Some voices advised Ted sagely, while others en-
 couraged her:
"Blind her, Teddy!" "Fall on him, Betsy! Smash
 the little cur!"
Teddy went dancing around the room, here, there,
 everywhere;
While blows that would send him to his tomb were
 wasted on empty air—
Though some of 'em landed on the wall, smashing
 the pictures there,
And knocking holes in the plaster in a way that
 would make you stare.
But Teddy's blows fell the faster on her eyes, nose,
 mouth and jaw.
'Twas the grandest display of science and brute
 strength I ever saw.
He kept cool as an iceberg, while she went raving
 wild.
But she weakened at last, and sitting down, wept like
 a little child.
She didn't survive that battle long, for she pined away
 and kicked.
It wasn't the licking that killed her, but the thought
 that she had been licked.

THE HERMIT'S DREAM.

The hermit slept, where civilization's light
Had not succeeded darkness with a blight;
Where none but welcome visions dared intrude,
Upon his chosen sacred solitude;
No visitors to make him yearn for night—
For midnight's silence and the reign of Thought—
Could shatter there his meditative mood;
And, dreaming, saw a man who was too good
To live, like him, in solitude self-sought;
One to whom Nature had, with justice rare,
Given of wit and wisdom equal share.
Of his wisdom he was not too well aware;
While mercy ruled his wit and drew the rein
On fun that gave a fellow-creature pain.
Reason held all his passions in control;
Honor, which is to the immortal soul
What health is to the body, was his guide;
A quiet conscience kept with seeming pride
The head erect of one who ne'er defied,
With fourth-rate actor's scowl of scorn and hate,
The consequence of folly—known as "Fate."

For that which *any liar* can bespot—
A "spotless reputation"—he cared not;
To intellectual greatness mutely bowed,
But gave a loving heart his praises loud;
From rank and jewelled fingers turned aside
To grasp an honest hand with honest pride:
In womankind his higher self appeared;
At pure Platonic love he never sneered;
Beauty admired, but motherhood revered.

The hermit gazed upon him with a smile
And muttered to himself, "I like his style."

As Byron said, when on a different theme,
"A change came o'er the spirit of his dream."

He saw a woman then in whom was joined
Good sense and beauty equally combined;
Who spent not half the morning at her glass,
Learning a pose to please some perfumed ass;
Who wedlock with a beast in human shape
Feared as she would a fierce gorilla's rape;
Who did not take true modesty to mean
Stockings too badly damaged to be seen;
Who 'neath a stylish suit of clothes could see
The nerveless arm and leg weak at the knee;
Could see beneath the hat, raised with an air,
An empty head of nicely barbered hair;
But saw no evil passions from her breast
Reflected in some sister, better dressed;
Nor would that sister's faults too nicely scan.
"She's worthy," said the hermit, "of the man!"

'Twas but a dream, and yet methinks I can
Find in the flesh that woman and that man,
And joining them in wedlock, start the birth
Of a new race of beings on this earth."

Leaving his peaceful solitude behind,
He sought the crowded hives of human kind
And wandered north and south and east and west,
And wanders yet in his vain hopeless quest.

QUEEN HEVA.

Around this grove where now I stand
Once stood a forest great and grand,
Where good Queen Heva reigned of old.
She knew no fashions, wore no dress,
But slept here in her nakedness
The winter long, and caught no cold.

But all the summer time she spent,
With woman's love of ornament
Devoid of Admiration's snare,
Decking herself with flowers sweet;
With velvet moss she shod her feet,
And oak-leaves crowned her golden hair.

October saw this lovely queen
In regal state; her robe of green
So richly trimmed with every shade
From pink to scarlet, brown to gold,
That artists, merely to behold,
Many a weary journey made.

In innocence she dwelt here long,
And voiced her happiness in song—
Harmonious voice of solitude!
The sturdy trees, her body-guard,
Like soldiers stood and entrance barred
To Giant Progress—called the Good.

But soon her birds took flight in fear;
The Giant's axe alarmed her ear,
As down her faithful sentries fell
Tree after tree. Her song was hushed.
She paled with fear—with shame she blushed;
But where to fly she could not tell.

Retreat seemed circled. All around
She heard th' echoing axe resound ;
And never since his painful birth
Did Giant Progress show such force
As when, upon his iron horse,
He thundered o'er the trembling earth.

But lost in him were Heva's charms.
All beauty faded from his arms,
Save that which Art alone improved.
Good Imitation fired his heart.
E'en Heva's form, if smeared by Art
With paint, he would have dearly loved.

Yet Heva, banished from thy home,—
From grove to forest doomed to roam,
Where voice of Progress can't be heard,—
Though here thy reign is at an end,
E'en here thy praise is crudely penned
By thy uncultured rustic bard.

PORTRAIT OF A BEAUTY.

With hair white as snow, and thin ;
Wrinkled parchment-colored skin ;
Approximating nose and chin ;
Body bent as if beneath
A burden weighty ;
Troubled with "rheumatics" much—
Although she called it but a "touch"—
She stood, leaning on her crutch,
Showing her fifty dollar teeth,
This dame of eighty.

We gazed upon a portrait there
Of a maiden young and very fair.
All unconfined her wealth of hair
Fell around her shoulders bare—
Disorderly, yet not amiss—
In ringlets jetty;
Framing a perfect oval face,
A head well poised 'twixt pride and grace,
Dark-blue eyes that seemed to trace
Our every movement round the place,
Lips a man would die to kiss,—
“You think her pretty?”

“She’s quite a beauty,” I replied.
“Ah, that she was!” the old dame cried.
“She was the envy or the pride
Of all who knew her.
She for years the title bore
Of village belle, and, what is more,
Wealthy suitors by the score
Came to woo her.

“Ah, me! those happy days are gone.
How rapidly the years roll on!
There lives not now a single one
Of all who sought her.”
A dreadful picture filled my mind
Of twenty rivals all combined
In mortal strife, to all things blind
Save mutual slaughter.
Not one survivor of that crowd!
Luckily, when I spoke aloud
I merely asked this dame so proud:
“Was she your daughter?”

"You must be blind, young man!" said she,
Speaking quite indignantly.

"You've no discernment, I can see;

I thought you'd plenty.

Daughter, indeed! How very strange!

Can there be so great a change?

Why, bless your soul, that's ME, you know;

Taken sixty years ago,

When I was twenty!"

DECORATION DAY.

While brooding Memory strewed the dust

With flowers fair,

Faith, viewing from afar the scene,

Would hardly dare

To break the sacred silence with,

"They lie not there!"

For Sentiment was there with his

Approving grin.

Soon martial music filled the air

With mocking din.

Sweet look the mounds as dead sea fruit—

Ashes within.

While only on remembered graves

Fresh flowers lay;

The quick'ning sun smiled on them all,

And seemed to say—

"Death is the Sun that rises on
Eternal day."

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In this fair land the battle cry
Is heard no more ;
No longer patriot souls defy
The cannon's roar,
Nor hireling war-dogs welt'ring lie
In purchased gore.

Still heroes, brave as ever fell
On bloody field,
Unknown maintain a noiseless fight,
And never yield ;
Death their reward, and honor bright
Their only shield.

No yearly memorials they need
Upon their clay ;
Their work will live when chiselled fame
Crumbles away,
And seeds which they in earth-life sow
Flourish for aye.

WEAVING.

To and fro the shuttles go.
Tell us not the "fates" are weaving ;
While with care our work we do
Different doctrine we're believing.

Tell us not so, for well we know
There is no fate unless we're willing.
To and fro the shuttles go,
God made the warp, and man the filling.

Of silken thread the warp is made ;
The soul was made to fit the body.
But to and fro the shuttles go
For good or bad, for silk or shoddy.

As to and fro the shuttles go
We put no faith in faith's profession ;
For well we know all work will show,
And witness bear to each transgression.

THE UNSUNG HERO.

While the tread of marching millions makes the
ground beneath them quake,
While colors flaunt and prancing chargers foam,
With "Liberty" before them—Desolation in their
wake ;
Our unknown Hero starts to make a Home.

While opposing forces struggle where the neutral vul-
tures flock
O'erhead without a hungry doubt or fear,
He is felling sturdy timber, he is blasting barren
rock ;
Many wild and savage acres he must clear.

He sends no steel-clad messenger through living
walls to plough ;
The leaden seeds of death he does not sow ;
But behind the plough he marches, honest sweat
upon his brow,
And his battle cry is, "Durn ye! Gee! Haw!
Whoa!"

To him whose skill can raise a siege on any kind of
soil,
Give rank and all the glory he may crave ;
But the man who raised a mortgage after forty years
of toil,—
Let him slumber in his quiet, peaceful grave.

THE PIONEERS OF THOUGHT.

Looking backward o'er the ages, little need we his-
tory's pages
To behold that band of sages from the vantage ground
they sought.
O, the axes, ploughs and rifles of our frontiersmen
are trifles
Compared with paper, pen and ink, and Pioneers of
Thought.

'Mid hyena-laughter, mocking, with the scaffold
'neath them rocking,
With that hangman grim and shocking, Superstition,
long they strove.
To a God of war and malice, as from sacrificial chalice,
Their blood was spilled by men who preached a God
of Peace and Love.

From beneath the Tyrant's lashes—rising Phenix-like
from ashes
Of burnt heretics—they struggle on in spite of hoot-
ing crowds ;
On they're marching, higher, nearer, and their cause
is plainer, clearer :
As brightest lightning flashes from the blackest thun-
der clouds.

Past the palace, through the prison, every step they
take high treason,
Their progress is not heralded by sound of martial
drum.

No banner borne before them, but with light of Reason
o'er them,
From Orient to Occident with high intent they come.

Needless to recite each story of the battles long and
gory

Which, with monsters strong though hoary, our
brave Pioneers have fought.

All for us each bitter quarrel. Shall we crown them
with the laurel?

'Tis a weed they held in high contempt, those Pio-
neers of Thought.

Not to make themselves notorious, nor to court ap-
plause uproarious,

But to make our night-sky glorious those stars arose
and shone.

That they made our labor lighter; that their deathless
thoughts are brighter,

Ever growing and expanding—thoughtless sceptics
will not own.

Thoughts immortal? Unbeliever, think *you* of the
toil-worn weaver,

Whose weary hands the shuttle plied so many years
ago.

With stern Need behind him driving, he was thinking
and contriving,

That his thoughts are living in our looms let Knowles
or Crompton show.

Higher still those stars are rising, though the news
 may be surprising
To the spark, whose brightness lies in his shoes with
 opera toes;
Who, in his own estimation, is the cream of all crea-
 tion;
Though of source or destination he neither thinks nor
 knows.

Other paths ahead they're clearing, with the world
 behind them sneering:
Though commonplace the "miracles" their prede-
 cessors wrought.
When the doubters will see through it they will shout,
 "We knew you'd do it!"
For doubt is what they clear away, those Pioneers of
 Thought.

THE IDLE FACTORY.

Draw near and ponder on that ruin yonder
 Where colors gay frame a picture ill;
Where the strange bird Silence a little while since
 Swooped down to brood o'er a busy mill.

The path is grass-grown, the wheel is moss-blown;
 The raceway slimy as a stagnant pool;
Closed are the portals whence toil-freed mortals
 Came pouring forth like young boys from school.

Ne'er more we'll see 'em in this mausoleum
 O'er which trade winds mourned 'till they fell be-
 calmed;
Labor lies dead here. The laborer fled, ere
 He himself should be rust-embalmed.

We saunter sadly where once we gladly
Gave ear to music of mule and loom;
The place is lonely, green ivy only
Is true in death to this giant tomb.

Within, the scenery is dead machinery;
Here ingenuity has held his breath.
Not a shaft is turning. The spider's earning
Good wages here in the shuttle's path.

Dull rust is king here; no muse can sing here;
To the heart of Momus 'twould strike a chill.
In a cemetery there's much more merry—
More true to nature than an idle mill.

Would the silence plague us of a sarcophagus—
Shall we "shuffle off" here "this mortal coil"?
No! Let echo slumber 'mid the dust and lumber
Where once we listened to the song of toil.

TWO VIEWS. A DUET.

FIRST VETERAN.

Old comrade dear, I long to hear
Again the battle's blare;
The hostile shell, like fiend from hell,
Come shrieking high in air;
The charging shout; the foeman's rout
From field unstained by gore.
Were war like this methinks 'twere bliss
To go to war once more.

SECOND VETERAN.

'Tis not denied ; but when the tide
Of battle turns and sweeps
Back o'er the field where neither yield,
Where even Victory weeps
O'er heaps of slain upon the plain
Where Peace had smiled of yore ;
No! While I live my voice I'll give
To Peace forevermore.

FIRST VETERAN.

I hear the drum ; I see them come,
Ten thousand men like one ;
Ten thousand gleaming bayonets seem
To smile back at the sun.
The colors bright mine eyes delight ;
That standard once I bore!
Old Glory's star shines from afar—
Guides me to war once more.

SECOND VETERAN.

The cannons crash ; their lightnings flash ;
Their clouds obscure the sky
And glorious sun. Bright colors run
From wounds that close the eye.
At home I hear the cry of fear
Where laughter was before.
Behold this scar! I fear not War ;
But, Peace, I love thee more.

BOTH.

When statesmen prate and war create,
Let them the battle bear ;
The laboring man and artisan
Their country cannot spare.

Invasion they will drive away,
And guard their native shore,
Where hand in hand shall Honor stand
With Peace forevermore.

WE PASS BUT ONCE.

Lone and cheerless in the sunset of your life,
Worn and wearied by the fierce and fruitless strife,
You will review the chances missed and fancies flown,
Wild ambitions foiled and childish hopes outgrown;
But one thought shall fill your heart with deepest
pain,

'Tis that you can never, never pass this way again;
Never with experience sail o'er this sea again.

To help a struggling brother o'er a stormy mile,
To cheer a heart bowed down, if only with a smile,
To forego pleasure and avoid the rush for pelf,
To build up humanity upon your buried self,
Too late, alas! one phantom thought will haunt your
brain:

'Tis that you can never travel o'er this road again;
Never with your knowledge journey o'er this road
again.

Wear a smile, for frowns were never known to win;
Sing and joke, but keep the tale of woe within;
Soon you will find your shadow growing less and less,
Till you stand finished in the noonday of success.
Kindness conquers, learn to love your fellow-men,
For you shall never, never pass this way again,
Never can experience take you o'er this path again.

OUR FLAG AFLOAT.

Across the foam and far from home
Our vessel proudly flies ;
She seems to feel from truck to keel
That, under foreign skies,
She will be blessed by the oppressed
Of Princes, Kings and Czars,
When they behold with joy untold
Her flag of Stripes and Stars.

CHORUS.

She's fore and aft a Yankee craft
And manned by Yankee tars ;
And on the breeze o'er alien seas
Shall float her Stripes and Stars.

And we her crew in jackets blue
Our mission understand.
Our sires we know long years ago
For Freedom's chosen land
Fought on the main, nor fought in vain,
For triumph healed their scars ;
And now 'tis ours to show "the Powers"
Their flag of Stripes and Stars.

The spirit bold that manned of old
Small guns and wooden ships,
Encased in steel from rail to keel
Now speaks from guns whose lips
Jove's thunder shame when they proclaim
That Neptune's joined by Mars
Where ocean's tide reflects with pride
The flag of Stripes and Stars.

We claim no sway, nor do we prey
On nations weak or small,
Our land is broad enough, thank God,
And there is room for all.
But we our foeman's victim show
Where peace no despot mars,
A welcome smiles for all exiles
Beneath the Stripes and Stars.

Then spread more sail before the gale
That from our distant home
So gladly bears the hopes and prayers
Of kindred o'er the foam.
In right we trust. Our cause is just
As 'twas in former wars.
Tyranny's frown could ne'er haul down
The flag of Stripes and Stars.

A CHRISTMAS EVE BARGAIN.

He was a peculiar son-of-a-gun,
Who sold himself to the Evil One.
Agreeing that when his course was run
The forfeit he would pay.

"Old Nick," said he, "what I want is wealth,
It may come by force, it may come by stealth;
It may come at the cost of my precious health,
But come it must, I say.

"The amount of money you're bound to give,
Must fill the house in which I live;

You must start to fill it on Christmas Eve,
And fill it full that day.

"From cellar to roof the shanty cram,
I'll live and be happier than a clam,
When dead, of course, I won't give a d——;
You may carry the ghost away!"

On Christmas Eve a multitude
Of starvelings thronged that neighborhood;
Around that sinner's house they stood—
For bread began to shout,

Until their hungry, clamorous din,
So melted or maddened the man of sin,
That as fast as Satan shovelled 'em in,
He flung the ducats out.

Said the devil, "In this there is no fun,
I may shovel and shovel and ne'er get done,
The soul of that foxy son-of-a-gun
Is saved beyond a doubt.

"The fool is feeding the poor, and I'm
Hurting my trade. In the course of time,
With poverty gone—why, vice and crime
Would be almost put to rout!"

He dropped his shovel and wildly tore
His pompadour and cursed and swore,
And folks who saw it say he more
Than pranced and danced about.

KARMA.

Karma hath no written law.
From Experience you must draw:
A blank-book open, in the reach
Of all who wish the truth to teach;
Or cast aside your man-made laws
And reason forward from the *cause*.
What benefit can you expect
From reasoning backward from effect?
Guard well each thought—the thought of crime
Is seed that will bear fruit in time.
Every thought and act and word
Throughout the world is felt and heard;
Contributing towards harmony
Or discord—as the case may be.
Love well, but never fear the Lord.
Do right, but not for heaven's reward.
For your own sins you must atone;
A deed conceived is as good as done.
You'll get your due, go where you will,
All you deserve of good or ill.
Reward or punishment there is none;
You simply get what is your own.
You must suffer if you harm a
Living thing, by law of Karma.
Self-preservation bids us shoot
The robber crow, and weeds uproot.
But he is one of Nature's foes
Who kills a robin or plucks a rose.
Wrong no person. If you do
Some one else will injure you,
And he in turn find one to smite him;
And so it will go, *ad infinitum*.

Thus will you forge a link of pain
That helps to form an endless chain
Of misery no man can sever;
And thus the devil lives forever.
Beware, if you'd live in perfect bliss,
How you set in motion a law like this.
God may forgive, as preachers say,
But merciless Karma makes you pay.
You may weep and pray to the great All-Source,
But he lets this one law take its course.
Far from the earth you must withdraw
If you'd escape from Karmic Law.

MONKEY AND CAT.

As Tabby sat washing her face,
A monkey appeared on the scene.
It was in the old times when the animals talked;
So he threw up his hands, being terribly shocked,
Crying, "Shame on you! you're unclean!"

Said Tabby, still washing her face,
"Pray, kindly convince me of that."
Said the monkey, "'Tis plain to my logical mind
That if you were clean, little need you would find
For washing your face, Mrs. Cat!"

And Tabby, still washing her face,
Then quietly made this reply:
"The virtues of people make mirrors of them,
In which the depraved ones can see and condemn
The vices that in themselves lie."

A MERRY CHRISTMAS.

Christmas is coming, and you've laid your plan
To make the day as merry as you can.
What is your programme? Lots of drink—good
cheer?

Why, that's the very thing you did last year!
Anticipation gives a warmer glow
Than actual experience will show.
Go back a year. Now, what does mem'ry say
Of Christmas? Nothing. But the following day,
When recollection, half awakened, flings
Full at your aching head the silly things
You said or did before oblivion came
To rescue you from further cause of shame?
Come, tell me, did you have a merry time?
You look like one convicted of a crime
And waiting sentence. Try another way:
Your table's more than loaded on that day.
Port wine, plum pudding, turkey, and—but there!
The Muse turns up her nose at bills of fare.
Beware the wine: beware the morrow's qualms.
Call in some wand'rer, sorely needing alms;
Some wretch, made wretched by that very sin
Which you were thinking of indulging in.
Of what you meant to drink give him one half;
What would inebriate one man, two may quaff
In safety, and with happier effect.
Then pass the jest; and if, as I suspect,
Some well-fed dullards at your table sit,
Your tramp is never wanting in true wit;
Like certain matches, all he will require
Is kindred friction to awaken fire.
If, to complete the day, you think you need
The clan-creating confines of a creed,

Don your best dress and to your church proceed.
There for a brief space let your mind be bent
On Bethlehem's baby, whom the Father sent,
Homeless, moneyless, even from his birth,
To teach us that our higher selves are not of earth.

ASPIRATION.

The man does not live who ne'er felt the desire
To live on forever, if only in name;
The sky that bends o'er immortality's fire
Must bear its reflection—the light of pure fame.

There's no man too humble, no pariah too low,
To see that one light in the gloomiest skies;
False friends, notoriety, riches may go,
But *that* voice of Gabriel ceaselessly cries:

Arise, soul immortal! there's work to be done;
Something for which there is plenty of room
To stand and expand in the light of the sun,
While thy tenement crumbles beneath the cold tomb.

At least, O my Soul, there is something to *say*
That shall merit an echo—deserve to be sung
By true men and free men forever and aye,
Ere death overtakes me to silence my tongue.

Something to do that will give *thee* a place
On the broad field of Nature which none can deny;
Something to say that will *mark* thee in space,
Like the trail of a comet athwart the dark sky.

THE SPHINX.

Egyptian dust around me lies,
But God of Egypt never dies.

A Symbol of the eternal Soul,
I've seen the ponderous centuries roll
Slowly levelling out the way;
And all to me was a single day.

I've seen thee burst, undying Fame;
And, Glory, I have marked thy shame.
Born of Fact, by Falsehood nursed,
I've watched thee, History, from the first.

Pride in the dust; Humility throned;
Gods acknowledged and Gods disowned;
Empires rise and Empires fall;
The Sphinx's eyes beheld them all.

Miracles, too; these eyes have seen
This dust prolific as the green
Oases; Myth to Truth here spliced,
And Horus blossoming into Christ;
Osiris, Isis (idols wrecked),
Still stand for Soul and Intellect.

I wait and watch with cold lips dumb.
I know there's something more to come.

What should I see? The unopened scroll.
O, purblind man, consult thy Soul!
I watch with calm, sad, sleepless eyes,
That portal closed of Paradise.

Let bigots ban me as they will;
A menace and a riddle still,
I am to them the unknown Sphinx;
The Watcher here who never winks.

LEGEND OF THE WILLOW.

The willow was—so runs the tale—
The stateliest tree in all the wood,
While others bent before the gale,
Erect and proud the willow stood;
Until the day when ruffian hands,
While searching for a cruel rod,
Tore from its limbs the straight, stiff wands
With which to scourge the Son of God!

When shuddering Nature cleft the rock,
And the temple's sacred veil was rent,
And the whole earth trembled 'neath the shock;
'Twas then the willow's pride was bent.
The willow drooped in meek self-blame,
Knowing its God—unknown to men;
The willow drooped in grief and shame,
And never raised its head again.

Bend low thine ear, self-righteous man!
Low cunning knows thou'rt but a fool,
Bend low and listen to his plan
To use thy saintship as a tool.
He knows himself who sometimes swerves
From wisdom's straight unerring line,
And beauty finds in folly's curves
Man is both human and divine.

LAMENT OF LAMECH.

Shun Lamech's presence, Lamech's bride,
And leave for aye his dwelling place;
The name of Lamech cast aside,
For it would be your child's disgrace.
Touch not my hand, 'tis stained with gore,
Which from a human being ran.
Go! Farewell, Love, forevermore,
For I have slain a fellow-man.

Thou white-robed angel, Peace of Mind!
Farewell—a long farewell to thee.
To Lamech thou art henceforth blind,
But Death shall lead thee back to me.
And I will yearn for thy return,
E'en though thy coming break life's span,
Since, living, I am doomed to mourn
For having slain a fellow-man.

The sun is like a thunder-cloud:
There's lightning in its blessed light;
In midnight gloom I cry aloud;
I'm haunted, haunted day and night.
Cool breezes scorch, and in the springs
Where I would drink that red stain ran.
The pigeon coos—the linnet sings:
"Lamech hath slain a fellow-man!"

What though the man whose blood I shed,
His brother in cold blood had slain?
Of me it will be truly said:
"He now must wear the brand of Cain."
Oh, what a sweet relief 'twould be,
Since life must bear this bitter ban,
Should earth-born justice murder me
For having slain a fellow-man.

DIFFICULTIES.

Be true to yourself, it will strengthen your heart;
Nature's a mother more loving than Art.
Generous as just, she is partial to none.
Hope and wait patiently; under the sun
Nothing worth winning is instantly won.

Dream not of doing, but do if you can.
A theory never gave birth to a man.
Genius and patience and labor are *one*.
Work and be practical; under the sun
Nothing worth doing is easily done.

THE TRIO.

O Whiskey old! O Woman young!
O Song! sung by melodious tongue.
World entrancing trinity,
Ye form the rake's divinity.
He sees no flaw, respects no law.
Such slavery is a happy lot,
And he is a fool who worships not.

O Whiskey new! O Woman old!
O Singer, suffering from a cold!
The rake, disgusted, damns all three,
And turns, sweet Virtue, then to thee,
With lengthening jaw, and thumps his craw.
Life is short and hell is hot;
He is a fool who worships not.

A STAR.

The bright gems that glitter and glow
In the ebony crown of King Night
Were bathing earth's carpet of snow
In a flood of celestial light,
When an angel appeared to the King;
She rivalled the ruler of Day;
No earth-walking poet can sing
Her song—'twas a heavenly lay.

A gift to the monarch she bore,
Surpassing the crown on his head.
From his hands the dark sceptre she tore,
And a Golden Rule gave him instead,
Whose splendor illumined his throne
With brightness beheld from afar.
The powers of darkness had flown
From the lustre of Bethlehem's star.

There were but three men on the earth
Whose faces were turned to the morn;
Three wise men expecting the birth
Of Manhood from Spirithood born.
Long had they been watching the skies;
Long eagerly waiting the sign
That would lead them to feast their glad eyes
On the human blent with the divine.

No more do we see that fair Star,
But can, if not wilfully blind,
In its place see the portals ajar,
And entrance to Paradise find.

Not now in the ether above:
Its beauty we now can see shine
In peace and in Brotherly Love,
And all that on earth is divine.

THE WILD ROSE.

In harmony with bird-song throbs the glowing heart
of June,
As through the woodland trips a maid who sings a
merry tune.
On through the pathless undergrowth in careless
mood she goes,
And in a quiet nook espies
A sweet wild rose.

"Alas, my pretty wild rose, left in solitude to bloom!
No longer shall your beauty bright be buried in the
gloom.
I will plant you near the pansy, dear, that in my gar-
den grows."
And she makes a dying captive of
The sweet wild rose."

Though overheard, in notes the maiden failed to un-
derstand,
A pretty bird sang, "Let it bloom; 'tis fresh from Na-
ture's hand.
Your lightest touch is ruder than the roughest wind
that blows
To scatter wide the petals of
The sweet wild rose."

Thus many a maid of promise rare and many a manly
youth,
Enticed by their well-wishers far from innocence and
truth,
Will find too late that kindly friends in truth are cruel
foes,
Who from the heart of nature pluck
The sweet wild rose.

“Full many a flower,” mourned poet Gray, “was born
to blush unseen.”
But nature’s eye, from seed to bloom, upon them all
has been.
Some flowers art may cultivate, but surely nature
knows
That to her wilderness belongs
The sweet wild rose.

HE WANTS TO KNOW.

Man’s form was made to look above,
His Maker to adore and love
While here below.
But, wond’ring, blund’ring, from his birth,
Still more, dissatisfied with earth,
He wants to know.

The imp of darkness by his side
In his free will awakens pride,
And bids him teach
That which he does not know himself,
And grasp what lies on Mystery’s shelf
Beyond his reach.

How were stars made? How long ago?
Heaven itself—he wants to know—
How near? How far?
Is the pale moon a dead world's ghost?
Dwells there a mighty human host
In yonder star?

Around him, meanwhile, reigns the night;
For darkness still avoids the light.
Where shadows lurk
Great evils thrive, their cause unsought.
Cease, idle talk and fruitless thought,
And go to work.

Inquiring man, since death must call
Such lifetime wasted, what is all
Thy guesswork worth?
Seek not to penetrate the skies.
The duty which before thee lies
Is here on earth.

THE SOURCE OF HAPPINESS.

You may not possess the *power* to help your fellows,
But if you have the *will* it is enough
To render the wealth accumulators jealous
Of your favor with the gods. However rough
The road you travel, you will never feel it
While happiness for *others* you would find;
To you alone the gods will then reveal it,
While selfish men grope, miserably blind.

POETS OF THE PEOPLE.

All honor to thee, scholastic bard!
In every school we hear thy voice;
But a sweeter song than thine is heard
In every home where hearts rejoice.

Our minds we bend, or ears attend,
To epic grand and classic rhyme;
Yet our hands extend to the hand that penned
The ballad, simple and sublime.

The illiterate ear thy name may hear;
The illiterate tongue its ignorance mourns;
Then drives away the vapors drear,
With a song of cheer by Moore or Burns.

The note is worth its face in gold,
But give to him the current coin;
To the lyric bard his heart is sold,
The bard whose voice his own can join.

In Lalla Rookh—that garden rare!—
The poetic bee may rove at will,
And from the fragrant flowers there
Of various sweets imbibe his fill.

With Anacreon's vine the slave of wine
An arbor round his fancy shapes;
Around his soul the tendrils twine,
For every line's a bunch of grapes.

But the laurel on the poet's brow
Is not kept green by songs like these.
Tom Moore might be forgotten now,
But for his "Irish Melodies."

The scholar's pen, the actor's tongue,
Must spread the greater poet's fame;
But songs the people love are sung
Where seldom's heard the great bard's name.

A GREEN CHRISTMAS.

The Christmas time of long ago,
When with our bowls of grog
We sat around the cheerful hearth,
Where blazed the big Yule log,
Is gone with all our boyish hopes
And keen delight in toys;
Perhaps our aspirations now
Are trifling as when boys.

At any rate, although the snow
That should be on the ground
Is sprinkled o'er our bothered heads,
Some pleasure may be found
Reflected from our offspring
In their childish short-lived joys,
And memory may bring back the time
When we were careless boys.

Let Skinflint prate of "common cents,"
And wag his *too* wise head.
When Christmas comes we'll damn expense,
And give the kids a spread.
For days three hundred sixty-four
Wise maxims we'll employ,
But on Christmas day the old man may
Become once more a boy.

THE BOHEMIAN BROTHERHOOD.

This Society of ours isn't bound by any vows ;
 You will need no influential man to name you.
 Your opinions we won't heed, nor encrust you with a
 creed,
 If you want to be a fellow in Bohemia.

Faults and follies never scan ; see yourself in every
 man ;
 If you stumble we'll assist and never blame you.
 Sit and laugh at Bubble Fame ; never try to make a
 name,
 For to-morrow never came to gay Bohemia.

Our musicians never hold Music in the chink of gold ;
 Than our poets none in Mammon Land is dreamier.
 With enough to eat and drink, of Dame Fortune
 never think ;
 There are better natured ladies in Bohemia.

To begin, we banish Care, hence we never comb gray
 hair ;
 As a thinking man we never could esteem you.
 Every man is, as a rule, wise enough to be a fool ;
 For the owl is not a symbol in Bohemia.

Yes, they say we early die ; but—the half-dead slaves !
 —they lie.
 You'll enjoy, until a higher life shall claim you,
 (By a sort of second birth) all the good things of the
 earth.
 Don't you want to be a brother in Bohemia ?

COMMERCE AND NATURE.

With the swift tide of Commerce careworn I float ;
One who sat by a brookside, in days now remote,
Dreaming dreams—seeing visions that never shall
fade,
Even when I'm at rest in Nirvana's deep shade.

I've heard the grand opera—remembered it long ;
Yet Memory holds longer the meadow lark's song ;
Down the aisles of Cathedrals sweet music heard roll ;
But the hush of the forest sank into my soul.

I have seen the great paintings, and know what they
cost ;
But where is the Artist like Sunlight and Frost ?
Give wealth to the Sculptor who carves the white
block ;
Give me the rude boulder and moss-cushioned rock.

From my great Mother, Nature, too long do I roam.
Though she misses me not, she would welcome me
home.
Some day I'll leave Commerce and (how the thought
thrills!)
Return to the forest, lakes, valleys and hills.

EPITAPH FOR A WOODEN GRAVE-MARK.

Why store up wealth to build mausoleums ?
Man knows it not when to this hole he comes.
Why should want create alarm in us ?
No time is long that has a terminus.
Nor want, nor wealth, we cannot take wi' us,
For both belong to the sphere terraqueous.

SONG OF A RIVER.

Down from my mother hill
Leaped I, a tiny rill.
"Some day," said she, "you will
Be a great river."
Downward with spirits gay,
Joining my mates in play,
Strength gaining day by day,
Union the giver.

I grew apace, and then
Roved through a fairy glen,
Where would-be fishermen
Dream as they angle.
Hard by that rippling stream
Lovers oft came to dream,
With ne'er a worldly scheme
Or petty wrangle.

Their prattle wakened hope;
I, too, began to grope,
Seeking the broader scope
Of joint endeavor.
Need I the tale relate
Of how I met my mate,
And became twice as great?
I am a river.

On dashed my mate and I,
O'er the rocks leaping high,
Up towards the smiling sky—
Smiling derision!

Soon came the end of this ;
Dashed were our hopes of bliss
Over a precipice,
Such is ambition.

Hark to the city's din !
Now for the drains of sin ;
Now for the pouring in
Of cares that madden.
Now for discordant noise ;
No more shall I rejoice,
No more the song bird's voice
My soul shall gladden.

Music is mine no more ;
Strife hoots from shore to shore ;
Fain would I drown thy roar,
Commerce, my master !
Varied the loads I bear :
Pain, pleasure, hope, despair,
And, 'neath my surface fair,
Death and disaster.

Wild mother, weep o'er me ;
Poor boy ! 'twas fate's decree.
Sweet shall thy meeting be
With him to-morrow.
Come to me, Suicide !
Come like a trusting bride ;
Deep in my bosom hide
Thy shame and sorrow.

Farewell, ye laughing rills,
Leaping from cloud-kissed hills ;

Guileless the hope that thrills
Each infant river.
Full grown you wish to be,
But when you are, like me,
Nearing an unknown sea—
Ah, then, you'll shiver!

No more I freely range;
Seek nothing new or strange;
Heed not the season's change,
Wintry or vernal;
Windings and twinings past,
Straight is my course at last
Down to the ocean vast,
Fathomless, eternal.

NIGHT.

Why should the bullfrog groan
When the night comes?
Why should he bemoan
As if a blight comes?
It is by night alone
That what little there is known
Of the Universe is shown
And true light comes.
Descend, then, dazzling sun
When the night comes,
I am glad thy course is run,
And if night comes
On the storm's cloudy wings,
And utter darkness flings
Over earth's obnoxious things—
Then respite comes.

EXCUSES.

All the world is like an orchard,
When the farmer gleans his crop,
Rotten fruit is not discarded,
But is seldom found on top.
Have you failed to be an apple,
Which a certain price will bring?
Pose, then, as the spotless blossom,
Pruned away in early spring.

Somewhere in the autumnal muster,
If you cannot find a place,
You were nipped by frost—not later
Shaken off in foul disgrace.
Anything, my friend, but failure!
Never say it was your sin,
Bad boys, bad luck, some one's blunder
Prematurely took you in.

“ TO-DAY.”

Let the Present encircle us ; as for the Past,
It is gone to convince us that nothing can last.
No cloud from the future should darken our lives ;
For, though constantly coming, it never arrives.

To-day, boys, to-day,
This hour will be with us for aye.

Hope, Despair and the Future: three persons in one,
And that one a chimera—luring us on,
Making all things in life disappointment and dread
For the man who is constantly looking ahead.

To-day, boys, to-day,
This hour will be with us for aye.

To-day is still with us. Its sunshine and gloom
Are but changes beguiling our road to the tomb.
A laugh and a groan may be in the same breath,
Make the most of To-day, for To-morrow is Death.

To-day, boys, to-day,
This hour will be with us for aye.

Then here's to the Present, for naught else can last,
The Future can't catch us; to h—— with the past.
To-day's always with us, let weal or woe come,
Then here's to the Present, in water or rum.

To-day, boys, to-day,
This hour will be with us for aye.

HARMONY.

What's Poetry? the Rhymer asks,
For he knows least of all;
Though on the ear to music tuned
His polished numbers fall,
A pleasing sound that lulls to sleep,
But never wakens thought;
Smooth roads that ne'er suggest how hard
The patient paver wrought.

But ask the winds; the boreal blast
That sweeps the wintry sleet
About our ears, that stirs the blood,
And makes the pulses beat;
Or gentler breezes from the South
That bring the Northern nose
Memories of the land where bloom
The magnolia and the rose.

The winds that spread each word we speak
Abroad from pole to pole,
Making each breath we draw a thought—
The essence of the soul.—
Are under one Universal Law,
Whether voicing our joy or grief,
Clashing together thunder-clouds,
Or leaving the last brown leaf.

From rugged pine to graceful palm
They waft the mystic tale
Of how the poison turns to balm—
Of how the roughest gale
And gentlest zephyr are but one,
If rightly understood,
And working for the best of all
Are the evil and the good.

THE LAUREATE TO HIS PSYCHE.

Draw thy mantle around thee close, Psyche, my soul!
A cold wave is coming and costly is coal.
Let thy natural charms be fresh moulded in style,
And on thy deformities mankind will smile.

O Psyche, my true friend, the days are gone by—
The days when we dared to look Power in the eye.
Draw a veil o'er thy keen eye that shines like a star;
See things as they "ought to be, not as they are."

There's a brighter light dawning, O Psyche, for thee;
But crouch in the shadow, it might dazzle *me*.
Encumber thy shapely limbs, now that thou'rt sold,
With chains of self-interest—chains of pure gold.

Now get thee behind me, and stay in the rear,
Like a Turk's Grecian captive a-trembling with fear.
No longer thou'lt lead me, but thee I'll control,
Draw thy mantle around thee close, Psyche, my soul.

WALT WHITMAN'S POETRY.

What poet's this who owns the earth;
Who lived and died before his birth;
Who in the face of death found mirth?
To find him where shall *we* go?
His Thought—his Soul—we here rehearse.
Unschool'd in prose, unrul'd by verse,
'Tis Whitman—He, the universe!—
The hearty whole-souled Ego.

To think how oft we used to meet;
How oft I passed him on the street
In Camden town, and failed to greet
Because I failed to know him.
Strange man, I called him; strange indeed,
To lads like me that took no heed.
Of all the poems we write or read,
Life is the strangest poem.

Dead? So's the grass where he loafed so well—
The meadow green—the ferny dell—
The mouse that staggers the infidel,
And the dappled sky above him;
Dead lies Delaware in his bed;
Low is blue Ocean's hoary head;
The Angel of Death himself is dead,
For Whitman used to love him.

Each living thing was a part of him,
From lives that fly to lives that swim;
Heaven's bright vault and the cavern dim
Were his attic and his basement.
He loved the flower, yet understood
The noxious weed, too; and he could
Find all in himself and all things good,
And death was but displacement.

From the printed page I see him rise,
Gray old man with the kindly eyes
And mien benignant! Memory flies
Back to my native city.
Again near his home I see him pace,
In spite of pain, with musing face;
And there at his feet I humbly place
The tribute of my ditty.

THE KINGDOM OF SILENCE.

In the Kingdom of Silence there's plenty to do,
But nothing to say unless pithy and true.
Mouth closed and eye open, there no one is blind;
The subjects are tongues and the monarch is mind.

The fault-finder there lets his neighbor's alone,
Having plenty to do to discover his own.
There Action is eloquent, dumb is debate;
And laws made by Nature no lawyers create.

No Knowledge-Box there with his lid open wide,
Lets out all that's in him—derived from outside;
But the man of true Knowledge will speak by request,
As the sponge, all-absorbent, needs but to be pressed.

The rattle-pate there is like our rattlesnake:
Fools warning the wise with the chatter they make.
Yet solemnity there is not taken for sense;
Laughter, though quiet, is hearty—intense.

No donkey, annoyed by the ass's loud din,
Complains that he can't get a single word in!
But silvery speech, at Necessity's call,
There receives golden attention from all.

But the babbler of secrets—the tattler of tales—
The gossipy woman, and man who bewails
The woes of the world and the lack of God's grace—
Think the Kingdom of Silence a desolate place.

TO THE EVENING STAR.

Star of the evening, what art thou winking on:
The progress of night or decline of the sun?
Perhaps it depends upon what we are thinking on:
Promises broken, or duty well done.

Full well we know thou wilt look less approvingly
On dull rusty iron than bright burnished steel.
The clear running streamlet smiles back at thee lovingly;
The pool that is stagnant no pleasure can feel.

From the man who delights in truth, honor and
purity,
All who bask in fame's sun may turn proudly away;
Though at noon he may toil in the shade of obscurity,
Night sets thee, a gem, in the crown of his day.

MY FORTY-FOURTH CHRISTMAS.

Anticipation Day! I see
The children gather round the tree
 I decked last night.
Time has flown! Yet it seems so long
Since my morning prayer was a merry song,
 The pure delight
I must have known I hardly miss,
But realize that my song of this,
 The afternoon,
Is not so simple, clear and glad.
The mirth is gone, and something sad
 Has changed the tune.
But still, whate'er the Muse may bring
To this crude harp she'll find a string
 Responsive, proud
To bear her message for the few,
Though it may pass unnoticed through
 The heedless crowd.
Without premeditation, then,
I'll lisp my lay, let judging men
 Be pleased or vexed.
I'm on the stage to play my part,
Whether from Nature or from Art
 I take my text.
A pleasing tale I may rehearse,
Or clothe in scarlet robe of verse
 A brother's wrong.
Sorrow or laughter, hate or love,
Whate'er may be the burden of
 My coming song,
I'll sing that song; let critics give
Me heads of cabbage while I live;

They're fit to eat;
Or let friends, when I seem to die,
Visit me where I will not lie,
With flowers sweet.

INFIDELITY.

Infidelity is to doubt
That Truth at last will put to rout
All that is false; and boldly shout
In market places:
"I'll be no longer bought and sold!
'Tis time the difference should be told
Between the priceless hearts of gold
And brazen faces!"

Infidelity basely lends
Aid to injustice; slanders friends;
And, to attain his selfish ends,
Ruins his brother;
Poisons the politics of his state,
With cunning lies and artful prate,
Leading his fellow men to hate
And wrong each other.

No, no; the devil is not a myth.
The name he's newly christened with
Is Infidelity, and his pith
Is human marrow.
Still he is Legion, for his sons
Manage our press and man our guns,
While he through crusty Conscience runs
His plough and harrow.

TWO CHOIRS.

A dead bird had its perch
In her hat—latest style;
And she entered the church
With a complacent smile;
For she knew as she sat
How the dudes would admire
The dead bird in her hat,
As she sang in the choir,
Giving praise to the Lord in her way.

To the woodland repair;
Oh, with me come along,
Where the balmy spring air
Is replete with bird-song;
For God, who hears prayer
In the soul's mute desire,
Is interpreter there
Of that sweet feathered choir,
Singing praise unto Him every day.

TO-MORROW.

Day after day is passed away
In hoping and in trusting;
Forming a chain of grief or pain,
Which we must keep from rusting
With oil of hope, while still we cope
With each new day of sorrow,
Link after link, and daily think
Our joy will come to-morrow.

Thus chained we chase from place to place
A phantom ever keeping
Beyond our clutch—but not too much
To keep despair from sleeping.
And when worn out, the sexton, doubt,
A grave's about to burrow,
He's put to rout; we hear a shout:
Wait! wait until to-morrow!

Look up, sad soul; there is a goal
Far, far above that scoffer.
Such phantoms smile but to beguile;
'Tis Dead Sea fruit they offer.
But God, unknown to thee, hath sown
Seed in each tear-worn furrow,
Whose fruit shall bloom beyond the tomb
In the only sure to-morrow.

Then let us pray and work to-day.
The future is uncertain.
God's hand alone can make it known,—
Can draw aside the curtain.
And if he should, 'twould do no good,—
He knows we could not borrow
The joy or care which we'd see there,—
If Death came ere to-morrow.

TO THE ICONOCLAST.

"Idols" are *ideals*. Let 'em alone.
To those who love and *know* 'em,
Though to *you* but gold, brass, wood or stone,
Each is a perfect poem;

L.of C.

A symbol of something nobler far
Than the vanities you may cherish.
Destructible visible signs they are
Of truths that can never perish.

You may preach and prate of "idolatry,"
But the spirit bears no restriction;
Wood is as sacred as gold to me
In the sign of the crucifixion.

Oh, dream not that the man is here—
That his soul stoops to adore it;
His spirit communes with a higher sphere,
While his body bows before it.

But go, since smashing's to be your plan,
And smash the image breaker;
The iconoclast who destroys in man
The image of his Maker.

EPITAPH.

Here lies a man who was dispossessed
Of a devil when life departed.
The spark that had animated his breast—
From the hell of the envious hearted—
Is quenched at last by a neighbor's tears!
Now, don't interrupt with incredulous sneers,
Nor think for a moment that sympathy's breath
Could burst such a buoyant bubble;
The fact is the fellow was tickled to death
By the news of a neighbor's trouble.

THE EMPTY FLASK.

In a corner of the cellar, mid cobwebs, dust and
gloom,

Beneath a heap of musty unpaid bills ;
Surely thou wert worthy of a better tomb,
Poor victim of consumption—worst of ills !
Thou wert of my table the brightest ornament,
Than thee no better company I'd ask.
Many a happy evening alone with thee I've spent—
Alas ! my lifeless empty whiskey flask !

Where are my boon companions—that merry-hearted
throng—

For whom thy sparkling life-blood ebbed so fast ?
They cheered thy sinking spirits with many a ringing
song ;

But, though they did stay by thee to the last,
Not one of them is willing in thy elegy to join ;
To me alone is left the mournful task ;
Not one of them will offer e'en to lend a single coin
To replenish thee, my empty whiskey flask.

O, what horrors seized me when thy spirit fled ;
Creditors crowded round with outstretched hands.
Other demons teased me, till I wished that I was dead
Drunk or far away in foreign lands.
And so they still torment me, they give me no respite ;
They know me well, no matter how I mask,
But if thou wert alive thou couldst put them all to
flight.

Revive, revive ! my empty whiskey flask.

How the perspiration stands out upon my brow!
How fearfully my eyeballs seem to roll!
I wonder if the demons that grin around me now
Would take a mortgage on my battered soul?
If so, I could defy them, and all my other foes,
As in thy genial smile once more I'd bask;
And every time the demons would threaten to fore-
close,
I'd reanimate my empty whiskey flask.

DEATH IN LIFE.

They have no life who have no purpose;
By their coursing blood embalmed,
The animated contradictions
Are not only dead, but damned.

Corpses not yet in your coffins:
Perfumed walking fashion-plates:
Silly, trifling, idle feasters:
The man who really lives *creates*.

Sauntering dudes and lounging ladies,
The grave is your becoming bed.
Man may cheat the undertaker;
When his *work* is done he's dead.

Why remain above the daisies
Without a mission—scorning toil?
Be at least a fertilizer—
Go under and enrich the soil.

THE FISHERMAN'S MOTHER.

The hour was late, but I could not sleep.
I sat here listening to the roar
Of the angry sea as it lashed the shore ;
Praying, as only a mother can pray,
For the safe return of my only son,
Who had sailed away at the break of day,
To win, as his father before him won,
His daily bread from the briny deep.

I sat here listening to the roar
Of the angry sea as it lashed the shore,
Hearing no sound but the tempest's din,
When the latch was lifted and Jack walked in.
He walked to his old place near the stove,
Then turned and faced me. Heaven above!
When will that picture leave my mind?
Though my eyes with age are growing dim,
The eyes of the soul will ne'er grow blind.
I can hardly see you, but I still see him.
His clothing was drenched, his head was bare,
And seaweeds clung to his dripping hair.
My heart stood still with a strange, cold thrill.
Oh! the mournful eyes and the ghastly cheek!
My hands I clasped—something I gasped ;
His pale lips moved, but he did not speak.
Without one word he walked to the door,
Then turned and gazed upon me once more ;
And then—I fell fainting upon the floor.

Next morning the neighbors broke the news,
Which, the night before, my boy had made known ;
I had nothing more in this world to lose,
And ever since then I have lived alone.

THE MISSING LINK.

He held me with the glittering glass
Stuck in his languid eye.
A tailless horse he rode, of course;
I mildly asked him why.

"He used it during summah time
To bwush off flies," said he.

"I docked it lest it might suggest
That there were flies on me."

This answer roused my righteous wrath;
"Speak truly; thou didst rob
That noble brute, thou d—d galoot,
To *ape* the English snob.

"I know what docked thy horse's tail;
Now tell me, who docked thine?
Thou art, I think, the *missing link*,
Whose loss made Darwin pine."

HEAVEN AND HELL.

Close by his home a crystal pond,
Fit to bathe his soul in;
With a lofty hill beyond,
A view of Peace controlling;
But the demon Discontent,
Rising like a siren,
To the summit with him went,
All he saw desiring.

His brother, where the life-breath comes
O'er garbage heap and gutter,
Earning in the city's slums
Scanty bread and butter,
Hears discord with a tranquil mind.
Perhaps he knows no better;
But smoke the Vision cannot blind,
Nor brick walls fancy fetter.

Thus heaven or hell each man may make
By mental necromancy;
Between the two his choice may take:
Dull Fact or brilliant Fancy.
But, if before each social ill,
To bow without resentment
Means "heaven," I must decline the pill;
To Hades with Contentment.

So come thou angel, Discontent,
And blast the rocks of Custom.
Too much time and talk is spent,—
Reformers! Who can trust 'em?
The path of Progress clear at once;
With Well-enough do battle,
And leave Contentment to the dunce,
The pigs—and such-like cattle.

THE TRUE SCHOOL.

You may be unread—unlettered. Education never
bettered
The spiritual condition of a man;
But in common we inherit an immortal holy spirit
From our Father since the human race began.

If you're seeking worldly knowledge you will find it
in the college,
Where e'en Folly may the ancient page unroll ;
But Wisdom has no teacher and the only way to
reach her
Is to seek an introduction through your soul.

You must learn to love your neighbor, even though
he should belabor
You with a club, or cut you with a sneer ;
And when visited by sorrow bear in mind the bright
to-morrow,
And see Heaven's smile reflected in a tear.
• Quarrel not with sect or nation and avoid all litigation ;
Keep all the passions under full control.
You must even seem inhuman and be blind to sex in
woman,
If you want to get acquainted with your soul.

You must be prepared for malice, for the King of
Hell is jealous,
And his forces will assail your rear and flank.
His children will surround you, scoff at, persecute and
hound you,
And instead of double D, you will be Crank.
But heed them not ; keep onward in your tireless journey
sunward,
Where the heavens will be opened like a scroll ;
Though in crowds you will be lonely, and will hear
Fame's trumpet only
In your God's approving voice within your soul.

THE THINKER'S GRAVE.

His tomb is his throne, from which he'll rule
Millions of thinkers yet unborn.
Disciples of those who called hm fool
And held the work of his life in scorn,
Shall—acting like the unconscious tool—
Unwittingly aid in the Thinker's rise
With a pedestal formed of sanctified lies.

The day of death is his hour of birth.
From the single seed springs a thousand flowers.
More dreadful than when he walked the earth,
To the bigots who note his growing powers—
Though their fathers found him a theme for mirth—
Is the Thinker mouldering in the dust;
For his Thought lives on, and expand it must.

A PRAYER.

God guide our sightless leaders—
“Blind leaders of the blind.”
God save the little children
From their parents' state of mind.
God shield all true religion
From sacrifice of blood.
God bless the honest heretic
And make him understood.
God help the manly effort
That tries to help itself.

God keep me from the worship
Of the soulless God of pelf.
God give me work in plenty,
And at three-score and ten
Man may chisel on my tombstone
The single word—AMEN.

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